

MEMBERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

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Tennessee Motor Coach Association

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IN NORTHERN INDIANA



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December 8-9

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The Sounds of Darkness

Aquarium Animals Could Greet the Aug. 21 Eclipse with Bellows, Grunts or Silence



Since the opening of the Lemur Forest exhibit earlier this year, the Aquarium's Ring-tailed and Red-ruffed Lemurs have demonstrated time and again that they're keenly aware of what's going on above them.

When they spy a plane or hawk passing overhead, these intelligent mammals will sound a thunderous warning call alerting to the presence of a potential predator. Ring-tails, in particular, also are well-known for adopting a yoga-like posture to bask in pools of sunlight — an act known as “sun worshipping.”

So how will these sky-watching, light-loving animals react during the two minutes of darkness on Aug. 21 as the Southeast experiences its first total solar eclipse in nearly a century?

Not even the Aquarium's lemur experts are quite sure.

“I think it will depend how dark it gets and for how long,” says Animal Care Specialist Chelsea Feast. “I anticipate that they will stop what they are doing to look towards the sky and will recognize the change in light.

“They are very in tune with the light cycle since this controls their breeding season by indicating the time of year. During the eclipse, they may sit quietly and just watch the sky, or they may react with vocalizations. They may even move towards their transfer doors thinking they should head into their behind the scenes area to go to sleep.”

At a minimum, Feast predicts the eclipse will cause the Ring-tails to look up and grunt, a vocalization that indicates their curiosity. During the eclipse, it may seem as if you should follow the lemurs' example and focus all your attention on the sky, but the disappearance of the sun could result in strange behavior worth paying attention to in the world around you, especially at the Aquarium.



From grunting lemurs to quieter birds, Aquarium staff predictions and research from past eclipses suggest many of the reactions guests might observe on Aug. 21 could be heard rather than seen.

Visitors interested in witnessing these responses should head to the Tropical Cove, Appalachian Cove Forest and Mississippi Delta Country. The Aquarium's three Living Forest galleries feature abundant natural light flowing through both buildings' distinctive glass “peaks.” As such, animals in these spaces are most likely to react to the sun's temporary disappearance.

Animal Care Specialist Jennifer Wawra says the turtle species in Delta Country may not noticeably respond to the eclipse, but the American Alligators there could react to the sudden darkening by bellowing, much as they do during thunderstorms.

In the Appalachian Cove Forest, the native songbirds that fly freely through the gallery are likely to become much quieter during the eclipse. Anecdotal reports and numerous videos available online from eclipses around the world show birds reacting to the sun's disappearance by dramatically reducing their singing. During a total solar eclipse in Japan on July 22, 2009, researchers found that the calling of birds dropped from 16.4 “songs” per minute to absolute silence during the eclipse's period of totality.

Because of the rarity of total solar eclipses, research into how they impact animal behavior is limited. At the Aquarium, staff members plan to set up video cameras that will record the lemurs' reaction to the sun's disappearance, and guests can engage in a bit of citizen science of their own by monitoring the animals' responses first-hand.

Chattanooga lies just south of the eclipse's path of totality, the region where the sun will be completely obscured. With the proper protective viewing equipment, however, visitors to the Aquarium will be able to marvel as 99 percent of the sun's light is blocked for more than two minutes. Locally, the eclipse will begin at 1:02 p.m. with 99.55 percent of the light being obscured at 2:32 p.m. According to NASA records, the last time any part of the Southeast was in the path of a total solar eclipse was June 1918.



Visitors to the Aquarium on Aug. 21 are invited to watch NASA's Eclipse 2017 “megacast” in the auditorium of the River Journey building. This live streamed event, which will be viewable from noon to 3 p.m., will feature images captured before, during and after the eclipse by three NASA aircraft, more than 50 high-altitude balloons as well as astronauts on board the International Space Station.

Note: Despite the apparent lack of sunlight, looking directly at the sun during an eclipse can damage your eyesight. Those interested in watching this astronomical rarity can purchase special eclipse glasses in the Aquarium's gift shops while supplies last. These frames have been approved for solar eclipse viewing thanks to special lenses that reduce the amount of light being transmitted to safe levels.

Prepare now for travel related problems during the the Solar Eclipse

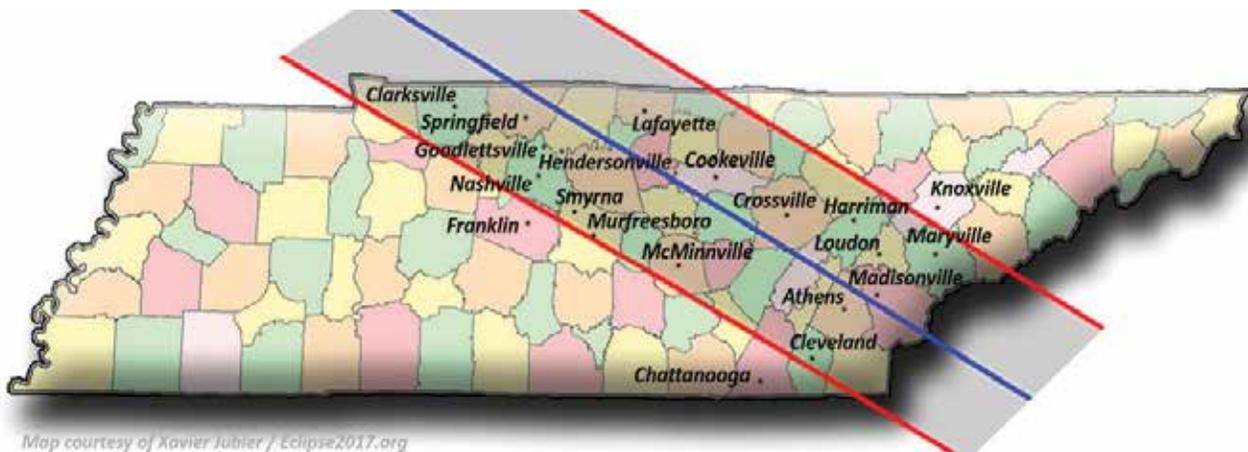
On Aug. 21, a total solar eclipse will be visible from the contiguous United States. It'll be the first to traverse coast to coast in nearly a century. A total solar eclipse is when the moon aligns with the Earth to block out the sun.

While all of North America will be able to see the eclipse on Aug. 21, most of the continent will only see a partial eclipse, which may or may not be noticeable depending on where you are. A total eclipse will only be visible along the path of totality, which is about 60 to 70 miles wide at any given point. The farther you are from this path, the less noticeable the eclipse will be.

The path of totality for the eclipse in August stretches from coast to coast — passing over Oregon in the west and moving all the way across the country to South Carolina in the east. This is a rare event; it's the first time the path of totality will eclipse only over the contiguous United States.

The path of the eclipse will pass directly through Tennessee. The optimal area will be North of Nashville from Clarksville, Hendersonville, Gallatin down through the state to Murfreesboro & Athens. Gallatin area will have totality of darkness for 2 minutes and 40 second. Hundreds of thousands of people will be travel to the Nashville area from all over the US and the World to see the eclipse. Many events and festivals have been planned around the solar eclipse.

It is reported that most the hotels in the Nashville area are already sold out and that traffic will be a nightmare on that day. Affecting Interstates 40, 65 and 24, which all travel through Nashville. For the Nashville area, the eclipse will begin around noon and end around 3pm. Total eclipse will be reached around 1:28 pm and last around 2 minutes. Protective eye wear is advised.



Map courtesy of Xavier Jubier / Eclipse2017.org



Roadway expected to have largest volume of traffic on August 21

Nashville Area	Athens/ Sweetwater
I-65 North and South	I-75 North and South
I-24 East and West	
I-40 East and West	Crossville/Cookville
155 Briley Parkway	
159 North and South	I-40 East and West
231 North and South	
840 East and West	

Travel will also be affected in these larger cities
Paducah, KY., Greenville, Columbia and Charleston, SC.

For more information on the path visit: eclipse2017.org/2017/path_through_the_US.htm